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Lenten Testimonies.*

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1. Who Is God?

There are two sources of information concerning God, nature and the Bible.

From nature we learn the *fact that there is a God*. "The invisible things of God from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead." Rom. 1, 20.

When Napoleon's generals down in Egypt one night were repeating the popular atheistic ideas of French revolutionary times, the great emperor said, waving his hands towards the starry heaven: "Who made that sky?"

Nature also reveals attributes of God. When we look out upon the wild mountains and the boundless ocean, we are impressed with the power of God. "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth His handiwork." The storm that sweeps over woodland and villages reveals the wrath of God. In the spring-time, when the flowers bloom and the birds sing, we say: "How gentle and good God is!"

But we do not know from nature who the true God is, neither how He is disposed toward us. For that knowledge we turn to the Bible.

The Bible does not prove that there is a God, it takes that for granted. The very first verse of the Bible says: "In the beginning, God," etc. And the last verse in the Bible says: "If any man shall

* Continuing a custom of former years, a series of Lenten talks is herewith presented that were delivered during the noon-hour of one week in Lent at the American Theater in St. Louis, Mo.

take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, *God shall take away his part out of the book of life.*" The Bible waves aside the argument as such by simply stating: "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God." Ps. 14, 1. What's the use of arguing with a fool?

The Bible tells us that "God is a spirit." "Hear, O Israel, the Lord, our God, is one Lord." Deut. 6, 4. "I am the First and the Last, and beside Me there is no God." Is. 44, 6.

However, while there is but one God, there are three persons in the Godhead. We believe in the *Triune God*, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, three distinct persons in one divine essence. All attributes are shared alike by all three persons of the Trinity. At the baptism of Jesus the three persons of the Trinity are present; the Father saying by a voice from heaven: "Thou art My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased"; the Son standing in the water, and the Holy Ghost like a dove descending and resting upon the Son. According to the command of Jesus the three persons of the one Godhead are acknowledged in the command to baptize: "Go ye and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost." And all three persons are alike God. The Son stands in no inferior position to the Father: "All should honor the Son even as they honor the Father." Peter insists that Ananias had not lied to man, but to *God*, when he lied to the Holy Ghost. Acts 5, 3. 4.

The three persons are inseparable. If we have the Father, we have the Son; and if we have the Son, we have the Father. Jesus says: "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." "I and the Father are one."

We are well aware that this is a mystery, and we do not endeavor to prove this revelation to our reason. It is not against reason, this doctrine of the Trinity in unity; it is *above* our reason. Faith begins where reason ends.

Jesus revealed God to us as the *Father*. That was the common name which Jesus applied to God. Jesus knew as no other could know. For Jesus was in the beginning with God. "Verily, verily," says Jesus to Nicodemus, "We speak that We do know and testify that We have seen." "And no man hath ascended up to heaven but He that came down from heaven, even the Son of Man, which is in heaven." And Jesus maintained: "No man knoweth the Father save the Son and he to whomsoever the Son shall reveal Him." In Bethlehem, in Nazareth, in Galilee, in Gethsemane,

Jesus is slowly, clearly, spelling out that name to men. Jesus pronounced that name when He said: "When ye pray, pray thus: Our Father." On the cross He proved the name.

But whose Father is God? Is he everybody's Father? Yes, everybody's. The Fatherhood of God is universal and independent of men and their characters. God is the Creator of us all alike. He is the Father of the humblest and the noblest; of the best and of the worst and most degraded. Absalom turned out to be a wayward son and brought sorrow and shame upon his father. But Absalom's disobedience and wickedness could not destroy the father's love. When word came that Absalom was dead, the old king wept: "O Absalom, my son, my son! Would God I had died for thee!" No waywardness and wickedness can ever change the heart of the heavenly Father. That is what Jesus would teach us in the parable of the *Prodigal Son*. God is the Father not only of the obedient son, but also of the prodigal son who went into the far country and wasted his substance in riotous living. The father's heart yearned for that wandering boy, and when he returned in his rags and fell down before him and cried, "Father," he folded him in his arms and took him to his heart and said, "My son, my son"; he that was lost is found, he that was dead is alive.

Yes, God is the Father of *all*. But, strange as it may seem, the Bible tells us as clearly that *not all men are sons*. This Book which talks about the Fatherhood of God speaks about men's "becoming the sons of God," of "receiving the Spirit of adoption." Our parents were created in God's image, but that image was lost, and with the loss of that image, that likeness of the character of God, they forfeited their place in the family of God and became prodigals. And we are all born of prodigals, born in the far country. We must come back to the Father, and the first step in the return is the knowledge of our sin and lost condition. Only after the Prodigal realized his pitiful condition away from His Father, did he determine to go back.

The way back to the Father's house is *Jesus*. "I am the Way." "No man cometh to the Father but by Me," says Jesus. "As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God." We must accept Jesus Christ as our Savior and put our trust in Him, who, fulfilling the Law and suffering the punishment for our sins, has redeemed us. Setting aside all our own righteousness and merit, we must trust for God's favor and forgiveness to what Jesus has done and suffered for us. So Christ has become the

great highway for the prodigals to return to their loving Father. In Venice there is a red line inlaid in the pavement or on the walls, which, if you will trace it through the tortuous, twisting, narrow streets, will gradually bring you to the great cathedral in the center of the plaza. And so through all the tortuous ways of life there is a red line made by the blood of Jesus Christ, which, if you will follow it, will bring you at last to the Father's house.

Ah, friends, if any perish in the far country, it is not the Father's fault. He loves us unceasingly. No sin can change His love. He yearns for us all. His heart is breaking for us. As often as one perishes in the far country of unbelief, the great All-Father cries pitifully like David: "My son, my son!" And the Father has opened a great highway on which we may return to him. No man cometh to the Father but through Jesus. He that cometh any other way is a thief and a robber and will be disowned and cast out. There is no other way. There is no sonship without faith in Christ. "As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God."

Our Father in heaven is perfect in this most tender and sacred human relation. He is perfect in *love*. He bears with us in patience which never wearies. The Bible contemplates all but an unthinkable contingency: "If my father . . . forsake me." "If"—it is not likely. It is not until every one else has first forsaken him and not then, generally. Yet if it should be so, yet God will take me up. "His mercy endureth forever." He loves us with an everlasting love. If only we will not go away into the far country, despise Jesus and His blood and atonement, and so put ourselves out of the reach of His saving hand. If in daily penitence we confess our sins and plead for mercy in the name of Jesus, we shall hear our Father in heaven whisper softly that sweet word: "My son, be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee."

Our Father is perfect in *wisdom*. Earthly parents are not always wise. Sometimes they are unwise in severity; more often they are unwise in the expressions of their affection. Many a child is spoiled, if not ruined, by foolish and misguided love. But God is wise. Whom He loveth He chasteneth. He knows when to chasten and how severely, and when and how to comfort and how to direct His children. If we will but be guided by His counsel, He will receive us to glory. Step by step He reveals the way to us, that we should walk in it. We cannot lose the way.

Our Father is perfect in *helpfulness*. Have you ever seen a

father stand by the bed of his sick child? The eyes of the sick look with mute appeal to the father. He stands in his torment and agony, watching the death struggle, but powerless to help, the picture of defeated love. But with God nothing shall be impossible. He can save to the uttermost all that come to Him in Christ Jesus.

If you come to the Father through Jesus Christ, then you need not go through life friendless and alone. "As a father pitith his children, so the Lord pitith them that fear Him." Ps. 103, 13. You need not trouble yourself with cares, for "He careth for you." You need not worry about to-morrow's food and raiment, for "your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things." He will make your bed in sickness; He will be your Refuge in trouble; He will guide you with His counsel and at last receive you to glory; through Him you will be more than a conqueror.

Now I would invite you all who have come to the Father through Jesus Christ to gather all your cares and anxieties together and repeat with me the prayer which the Master taught us: "Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever and ever. Amen."

2. How God Speaks to Men.

God speaks to all men through conscience, that remnant of the original Law which God implanted into the heart of man at creation. "For when the Gentiles, which have not the Law, do by nature the things contained in the Law, these, having not the Law, are a law unto themselves: which show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness and their thoughts meanwhile accusing or else excusing one another." Rom. 2, 14, 15.

But conscience is uncertain and unreliable and, sometimes, entirely perverted. Notwithstanding, God does in some measure speak to men through their conscience.

God has spoken to men in dreams and visions. This was a common method of communication in Old Testament times. But even in the New Testament God sometimes revealed His will to men in dreams and visions. For instance, God sent Peter to Cornelius and Paul to Macedonia by means of visions.

Now, however, God speaks plainly and authoritatively to men through the Bible. In comparison with visions St. Peter maintains: "We have a more sure Word of prophecy." All other methods by which God speaks to men, by the voice of conscience, by dreams, by visions, may be and must be tested by the plain Word of the Bible to determine their reliability. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God." 2 Tim. 3, 16. "Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." 2 Pet. 1, 21.

The Lutheran Church accepts the Bible, the whole Bible, and nothing but the Bible to be the Word of God to men and therefore the highest authority for all teaching and discipline in the Church. We require that all accept what is revealed in the Bible. We reject whatever is contrary to the Bible. In all matters in which the Bible does not make a definite statement we allow the individual liberty to accept or reject according to his own taste and judgment.

In the Bible God speaks to men concerning their souls and their eternal salvation. The purpose of the Bible is not to reveal scientific or historical information. Such matters are touched upon in Scripture only incidentally and in so far as they are necessary for God's chief purpose, namely, to teach men how to be saved. St. Paul says: "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness," not in science or history, but instruction in righteousness. John tells us that what is written in the gospels is written, "that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that, believing, ye might have life through His name." John 20, 31.

That being the purpose of Scripture, what does God say to men in the Bible regarding the way of salvation? What must a man do to be saved?

The Bible insists, from cover to cover, with painful repetition that *all men are sinners*. Paul says: "There is no difference; for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." Rom. 3, 22. 23. "There is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good and sinneth not." Eccl. 7, 20. God tells us in the Bible that we are sinners by *nature*. St. Paul says Eph. 2, 3: "We were by nature the children of wrath even as others." David confesses Ps. 51, 5: "I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me." We were born corrupt with evil tendencies and wills opposed to God. It is not true that men become wicked through environment, temptation, or poverty. Men sin because the inclinations and desires and appetites

are in their very nature. You need not paint the spots on a leopard, and you need not tempt a man to make him sin. It is as natural for men to sin as it is for a leopard to have spots. And so it follows logically, as the Bible confirms persistently, that we are sinners *by practise*, sinning in thought, in word, and in deed. Actual sin is simply original sin in action. "There is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not." Ecel. 7, 20. "There is none that doeth good, no, not one." Ps. 14, 3.

God very plainly states in the Bible that He will punish sin. There will be no weak administration of justice. Sin will by no means be condoned. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." Ezek. 18, 20. "Cursed be he that confirmeth not all the words of this Law to do them, and all the people shall say, Amen." Deut. 27, 26. No man shall say: "It is unjust; it is cruel." All the people shall say: "Amen," that is right; we deserved it.

Then if we all sinned and if God will punish sin, how can a man save himself? What can he do? God states with equal plainness and insistence that man cannot do anything to save himself. No man can fulfil the Law, being born in sin. No man can atone for his sin. A man cannot pay his debts by borrowing more money from his creditor. You cannot atone for yesterday's sin by any service to-morrow. You cannot pay a debt to God incurred yesterday by borrowing from His time and service to-morrow.

When the rich young ruler came to Jesus with the question of what he must do to be saved, and Jesus told him that, though he was rich and though he was a ruler in the synagog and had outwardly observed all the requirements of the Mosaic Law, still he lacked one thing, and when He then said to His disciples, as the young man walked away sadly: "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!" the disciples said in astonishment: "Who, then, can be saved?" meaning that if a rich man could not be saved by his wealth and a good man could not be saved by his righteousness, how can any one else hope to be saved. Jesus answered: "With man it is impossible," Matt. 19, 26, but He continued: "With God all things are possible." Yes, God did what we were unable to do, He saved us. "When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, *made under the Law*, to redeem them that were under the Law." Gal. 4, 4. 5. Jesus Christ fulfilled the Law for us, vicariously. Moreover, "the Lord laid on Him the iniquity of us all." "He was made sin for us." Jesus suffered all the consequences of sin for the whole

human race, even the death of the cross, and thus atoned for the sin of the world. "With His stripes we are healed."

Now God in His Gospel offers to all men forgiveness of sin through Jesus Christ. To as many as accept Jesus as their Savior God ascribes all that Jesus did and suffered and will give them a new spirit and a new heart. But this is the condition, that men accept the grace of God for Jesus' sake; that they lay no claim to God's mercy on the ground of their own righteousness or merit, but, acknowledging that they are lost and unable to save themselves, accept salvation in Jesus Christ.

The best men need Christ's merit and suffering as much as the worst. Certainly there is a difference between men in the extent to which they fall into sin. But all are lost and dead in trespasses and sins, and whether a man is shot through the heart ten times or a thousand times makes no difference. In either case he is dead. And whether a man is a moral outcast or an outwardly respectable man, in either case he is dead in trespasses and sins and must be quickened again. No man can be saved without Christ. Without shedding of blood there is no remission. "The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin," and nothing else will. "He that believeth not shall be damned." "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved and thy house."

And God is able to "save to the uttermost all that come to Him through Jesus Christ." There are no hopeless sinners; harlots, murderers, malefactors, — all may be saved. In Christ there is "plenteous redemption." The only sin that damns a man now is the sin of unbelief, of rejecting the one means of salvation which God at the sacrifice of His own Son has wrought out for man.

By the death of Christ *atonement* was made for sin, and sin was practically forgiven. The forgiveness of sin, effected for all by the death of Christ, is offered to all in the Gospel. Each person who hears the Gospel should by faith lay hold of the absolution which God there has pronounced upon him. Lay your hand on Jesus by faith, and believe that your sins which Christ has already atoned have been carried away, forgiven. "As far as the east is from the west," God has put out of His sight your sins.

3. Does God Send Trouble?

The answer that Scripture gives is simply: Yes! "Shall there be evil in a city and the Lord hath not done it?" Amos 3, 6. "Thou hast stricken them, but they were not grieved; Thou hast

consumed them, but they have refused to receive correction." Jer. 5, 3.

Instances where God sent trouble abound in Scripture. God sent the Flood. God destroyed the Tower of Babel. God sent the plagues of Egypt. God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah.

Even when God is not said to have directly and immediately caused a trouble, we know that all things are governed by God, and that therefore nothing can happen without His will or permission. "Not a sparrow falleth on the ground without your Father." No sickness, loss, or trouble can come into your life without the will of God.

Sin is the cause of all trouble in the world. God said to Adam: "In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." If Adam and Eve had not sinned, there would be no death, no sickness, no pain, no sorrow. But man's first disobedience, his eating of the fruit of that forbidden tree, brought death into this world and all our woe, together with the loss of Eden. It is the result of sin that God sends trouble.

God sometimes sends trouble directly and immediately as a punishment for a particular sin; for instance, the Egyptian plagues, the destruction of Sodom, the extermination of the tribes of Canaan.

More often the trouble comes indirectly as a consequence of sin. There is the case of Jacob. He complains bitterly: "Few and evil have been the days of the years of my pilgrimage." "Why, Jacob?" "Ah!" Jacob answers, "my sons have deceived me and brought shame upon my name, and my brother hated me, and I was an exile from my native land." "Yes, Jacob; still, is it surprising that Esau hated you when you cheated him; that your sons deceived you when they saw you deceive others?" Jacob's sins bore their fruit, and he had to harvest it. After David had committed his sins, was it surprising that his own children imitated him to his sorrow and shame?

Whosoever sins sets in motion terrible energies, which are incalculable and eternal in their results. A sin has often proved a crisis in a man's life, after which things were never again altogether the same in his life.

Nevertheless, we cannot always say that particular trouble is the result of special sin. Job's comforters were all wrong when they thought that Job was a sinner above others because he suffered more than others. As a matter of fact, Job was a better man than

any one of his three comforters. The disciples made the same mistake when they asked Jesus: "Master, who did sin, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" So far from being a mark of Cain and of special wickedness, trouble is sometimes a badge of Heaven's special favor; for we also read in the Scripture: "Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth."

When trouble comes to you, therefore, search your life. Both you and I will find enough sin to make our affliction seem light indeed in comparison; and let us repent of our sins. When trouble comes to others, let us beware lest we think evil in our hearts against our neighbor, supposing that he was a sinner above others. It may be as in the case of Job that he is more righteous than his judges.

Though trouble is God's punishment for sin, yet by His grace and mercy God makes the very results of our own sin to become the vehicles of blessings to us; *for God's purpose in sending trouble is always to save.* God is "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." 2 Pet. 3, 9. God in His providence does not aim at making us comfortable in this world and time. It is of paramount importance, whether we grow rich or poor, whether we are healthy or sick, that we should come to a knowledge of our sin and need and accept Jesus Christ as our Savior. And it is chiefly through the discipline of sorrows that God reveals to us our need, which alone can bring us to the foot of the Cross. Many a man on his sick-bed or even death-bed, many a man standing in the wreckage of his fortune or at the casket of a loved one, has learned to know his need, and thus has found his Savior.

Unfortunately there are many whom the Lord afflicts with this beneficent purpose who do not regard it. They do not see God's hand, nor do they recognize His purpose. Others, again, after they have recovered from their illness or retrieved their fortune forget their fears and their promises, as well as their vows. They turn again to their former lives of indifference, and again become engrossed with the cares of this world, live for its pleasures and treasures, and in the end are lost. It is not God's fault. It is concerning such people that we read Jer. 5, 3: "Thou hast stricken them, but they were not grieved; Thou hast consumed them, but they refused to receive correction."

Others, again, murmur against God in their trouble and rebel.

How foolish and futile! In that way they only deprive themselves of the blessing without saving themselves the trouble.

But even after we have found our Savior and embraced His salvation in faith, our troubles are not at an end. When the artist has brought the rough and shapeless block of granite out of the quarry into his studio, he begins to work on it with hammer and chisel until by slow degrees the perfect image of beauty emerges from the rock. And so the Master Artist, God, after He has brought us out of our natural state into His kingdom and Church, begins to hew away with the hammer and chisel of discipline and sorrow until by and by the likeness of the character of our Lord Jesus Christ appears in our life. Death is the last blow of the hammer that perfects the image. Then "we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is."

By the discipline of sorrow God *reveals us to ourselves*. A man has no more religion than he can command in the day of trouble; no more faith than he has when he is out of work and is spending his last dollar; no more patience than he shows under vexation. One affliction discloses a lack of faith, another an infirmity of temper, a third the power of some old habit. The railroad accidents which used to startle us have led to most of the improvements which render traveling by rail so comparatively safe in these days. Our troubles are intended by God to reveal to us our weakness, so that we might turn a vigilant eye upon them and fortify ourselves in those respects. We are to learn from defeat and troubles how finally to overcome and to gain the victory.

God sends us trouble to keep us from being wedded to this world and seeking all our good things here in this life.

A mother once brought her child to Gypsy Smith to shake hands with him, but the little fellow resolutely refused. Mr. Smith coaxed, and the mother threatened, and by and by the little fellow laid his fist into the evangelist's hand. But Mr. Smith wanted to shake hands, not fists, and so coaxing and threatening were resumed once more. At last the little lad broke down; the tears streaming down his cheeks, he opened his fist, and there fell into the hand of the evangelist the treasures of the boy, a few marbles and some colored glass.

So likewise do we hold our treasures in a firm grip. While we are willing to surrender ourselves to the Lord to be saved, we are always inclined to withhold from Him some special treasure. It is usually not until the Lord in His great mercy loosens our

hold and takes from our hands the treasures we hold so dear and we stand before Him at last with empty hands and perhaps weeping eyes that we lay our hands in His and say:—

Lead Thou me on
O'er moor and fen,
O'er crag and torrent,
Till the night is gone.

Especially is this true when our loved ones are taken from us; as our earthly home becomes lonesome and heaven becomes populous with our dear ones, we begin to realize that "Heaven Is My Home," and we look forward to the Father's house. Earth loses its charms; treasures and pleasures fade. We look more, and more wistfully, to that better country, even the heavenly.

Unbroken prosperity is ruinous. Therefore not many rich and great are saved, because their hearts are rooted in the earth. Abraham said to the rich man: "Thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things." Perhaps if he had not had them, or not so much, or if they had been taken from him, he might have considered the better riches in God and found them. Having so many treasures, many do not seek the pearl without price.

Let us thank God for our troubles. How can we expect to be saved without them when "even the Son of Man was made perfect through suffering"? "We must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God."

The Theological Student and the Bible.*

PROF. JOHN H. C. FRITZ, St. Louis, Mo.

The Bible is a singular book; it is, in more than one respect, the greatest book in the world, it is, in fact, the only Book of its kind. Its depth of thought the greatest thinkers or philosophers of the world have never been able to fathom, but its essential truths are presented in such simple words that even a child can understand their meaning. From a literary view-point the Bible is unique, both in its original languages and in its translations; it is the best literature that has ever been produced. The chief literary charm of the Bible is the extreme simplicity and the beauty of its language. Our English King James Version was made at the best

* Every Monday evening a brief chapel-talk is given by the Dean to the students of Concordia Seminary at the time of the evening devotions. The one herewith submitted is a sample.

period of English literature. To know the English of the English Bible is to know the beauty and the power of the English language. There is no better model for the study of English than the English of the English Bible. Carlyle, himself a master of English, says of the Book of Job: "I call the Book of Job, apart from all theories about it, one of the grandest things ever written by pen. There is nothing written, I think, in the Bible or out of it of equal literary merit." The Bible is the best story-book that has ever been written. Both the Old and New Testaments are filled with beautiful stories: highly interesting, thrilling, true to life, instructive. Critics say that the story of the Prodigal Son is the best short story ever written. The Bible is the most frequently quoted book in the world. Literature is filled with direct and indirect references to it and quotations from it. Many beautiful references and passages in literature can simply not be understood and appreciated by a man who does not know his Bible. Considered simply from a literary point of view, a man's education is not complete without a knowledge of the Bible.

Grand as the Bible is as a piece of literature, *we*, however, should not merely nor in the first place study it for the sake of its literary value, but because it is the *inspired Word of God*, able to make us wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. Of all books the Christian ought to know his Bible. It goes without saying that above all men a pastor ought to know the Bible.

When the theological student has been graduated from the seminary, he will find it a task to prepare well one sermon every week, perhaps in many cases two, with the additional number which he must prepare for holidays, special occasions, and funerals. Many a young pastor also teaches the church-school. This work, besides his pastoral duties, will take up so much of his time that he will study chiefly his sermon-texts and will neglect to make a *special study of the Bible as a whole*.

But does not the theological student in the course of his theological curriculum learn to know the Bible as a whole? No, not in the course of his *prescribed* theological curriculum. In the lectures on isagogies he learns to know the Bible as a whole only as far as its general make-up and general contents are concerned, the writers of the various books, the time when the books were written, and so forth. Isagogies is but an introduction to the study of the Bible and not the study of the Bible itself. Exegesis calls for a study of the Bible itself; but in the exegetical lectures only

a number of books or mere portions of books of the Bible are studied exegetically and not the Bible as a whole. The purpose of the exegetical lectures, treating certain important parts of the Bible, is to teach the student how to study the whole Bible and to encourage him to do so. In the lectures on dogmatics the Scripture-passages are studied which prove the great doctrines of the Christian religion and many other Scripture-passages are introduced, but all these are but a small portion of the Bible as a whole. The Scripture-lessons at the chapel services are also only small portions of the Bible selected for devotional purposes. In his prescribed theological curriculum, therefore, the student does not study the whole Bible. If he would learn to know the Bible as a whole, he must learn it by way of *private* Bible study.

My purpose this evening is to encourage you to *study* the Scriptures. It is unnecessary to emphasize that you ought to do this. Take a book of the Bible and read it at one sitting, so that at once you get an idea of the book as a whole. By reading and studying only portions of the books, very often small portions, we do not learn to understand the general trend of thought and the purpose which the book as such is to serve. To begin with, read a number of books in this way. Then for a better understanding read portion after portion, giving special attention to difficult passages. Remember the rule of hermeneutics that the Scripture is the only authentic interpreter of itself, *Scriptura Scripturam interpretatur*. For this purpose look up and study the references given in the margin of your Bible. Only in the last instance resort to one or more of the many commentaries that have been written on the Bible. Set aside a certain time each day or a certain time of certain days for private Bible study. You will do well to mark certain portions of your reading, make notes, and keep a list of beautiful Scripture-passages which you can later use as sermon-texts or by way of application in your sermons, or when calling on the sick, the erring, or the stranger without the gates.

Making a thorough study of the Bible will serve a threefold purpose: First, it will strengthen your spiritual life, add to your happiness, and increase your usefulness as an individual Christian in this world; secondly, it will be helpful to you in your sermon work,—many pastors often complain that they with difficulty find suitable texts for their evening service or for special occasions, the reason being that they do not know their Bible; thirdly, a thorough knowledge of the Bible will make you better able as a pastor,

a shepherd of souls, to supply the spiritual needs of the many different kinds of people whom you will meet in your congregation and in your mission-work.

Ceterum censeo, Search the Scriptures. Of all books which you read and know let the Bible be the book with which you are thoroughly acquainted from cover to cover. Don't make the mistake of reading many books about the Bible without making a thorough study of the Bible itself. May it be said of you that you "know the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus," remembering that "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works." 2 Tim. 3, 16. 17.

THE THEOLOGICAL OBSERVER.

The Synodical Conference. — The mission carried on among the colored people enters upon its fiftieth year in 1922, having been begun at the sixth convention of the Synodical Conference at Immanuel Church in Fort Wayne in 1877. — The Mayor of Atlanta has vetoed an ordinance of the City Council forbidding white preachers to serve colored congregations because that would signify social equality among the races. If Jesus came to Atlanta, — we shudder to think of it, remembering the instance of the "temperance" preacher of Brooklyn, who declared that Jesus could not be admitted to membership in his church because He turned water into wine. D.

The Ohio Synod. — The million-dollar offering has reached the sum of \$785,514.08, 504 congregations with 62,934 communicant members not having reported yet. — In Western Canada 52 pastors of the Ohio Synod are serving 41 organized congregations and 85 missions. Also a superintendent of missions and three professors of Luther Academy are in this field. D.

Augustana Synod. — Of the two sites offered for the new seminary of the Swedes at Rock Island, Ill., Zion Hill, adjacent to Augustana College, has been chosen and is now being reduced to the street grade. — The visit to the United States of the Swedish archbishop, Nathan Soederblom, upon invitation of the Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America, the World Alliance for Promoting International Friendship through the Churches, the Church Peace Union, the American-Scandinavian Foundation, and the Board of Directors of Augustana College and Theological Seminary, is looked for in the latter part of 1922, and it is expected that the archbishop will attend a session of the ULC convention at Buffalo in October. — In a thoughtful editorial on "Christian Liberty and Puritanic Phari-

saism" *Augustana* (February 2) says: "It behooves us to hold fast faithfully God's Word and the leading doctrine of our Church, for there exists an aggressive and arrogant Puritanic Pharisaism, which with its rationalism and work-doctrine is rushing in upon us from all sides and seeks to rob us of our Christian liberty. If we yield, we are lost. . . . The aforementioned pharisaical and rationalistic tendency is revealed by keeping silent or saying very little about the great redemption-doctrine of the Bible: justification by grace for Christ's sake, or by substituting for it a crass work-doctrine. Men — so they teach — are to be saved by becoming good, instead of becoming good through being saved, as God's Word teaches." — The old question that is perplexing the earnest members of the Lutheran Church for some time, to wit, whether our congregations are becoming worldly, is put forward from a new view-point by Dr. Adolf Hult of the Swedish *Augustana* Synod in the *Lutheran Companion* for January 21, 1922. He calls attention to a fact that deserves to be fully investigated, to wit, whether the existing and increasing secularization of our modern congregational life is not due perhaps to a weakness on the part of the so-called Christian element in the congregations, which is losing its former leadership in the Church. Dr. Hult says: "We are in a new era. The generation that saw great spiritual awakenings, the majesty of regenerating grace, has soon gone the 'long, long trail' (not 'down,' as the song has it, but) up, Home. The two-centuries-old Protestant secret organization world-movement, the Protestant Biblical critique, the Protestant loss of world-dominion (almost), all of this has told heavily. The World War wrenched the 'Christian element' loose from its lingering grip on the affairs of the Church. These have prevailingly passed into the control of efficient business minds, whether of the 'Christian element' or no. Socially it is not dominantly the experienced Christian souls who could sing with the patriotism of their 'citizenship in heaven' (Phil. 3, 20): 'Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord,' that lead the societies and movements, but capable organizers, men of affairs, women of social standing. Beautiful receptions still remind of the past and prophesy of a possible new future. But even among us it is more and more the other way. Meanwhile, what is the so-called 'Christian element' of our churches doing? Commonly they sit back in gray reminiscence. Once in a while, in a private heart-to-heart fête, they unbosom. The tears spring forth like a river dammed up. Perhaps the quiet moments end in a prayer of wistful sadness. And the world-controlled church-work goes on as before. I notice this change especially in the festivities of the churches, beyond our Lutheran realm, and often within it. We see it in the choice of lay-members for boards and committees. And as all such ages have a priesthood akin to it, so ours, too. The minority, the 'Christian element,' in the Biblical sense of that expression, is puzzled, unnerved, confused, despondent, its former thoughtful purposiveness apparently slugged and prostrate. If we pastors have failed to note this situation, it simply reflects, from another angle, the stupor which falls on him

who but for a moment yields his inner self to the gas-vapors of the secular trend.

"Reasons are what? 1) The 'Christian element' still remaining has suffered an inner spiritual exhaustion. 2) It has yielded to the worldly elements in crises, when the Christian stand in doctrine and in life should be assertive. 3) It has, like worldlings, often bargained for the 'filthy lucre,' church-success, where it ought to have been true to principles, and awaited God's hour to fill the coffers with means consecrated by the Spirit. 4) It has neglected to study the times, the trend of men's minds, the doctrines of the world-Gospel, the unbelief of worldlings, the connivances of the secular element of the Church, the good practical sides of worldly men's business ingenuity, and the like. 5) The Word of God has lost its absolutely decisive authority in the control of the Church, its management, its ways and means. 6) The 'Christian element' has frequently not kept culturally apace with the worldlings of the fold. Hence it has been outfaced in the counsels of the Church. 7) Hosts of other reasons, which you, dear reader, ought to be able to supply. You have the same opportunity of study as the writer.

"How the edge of honest, earnest spiritual critique is often cruelly blunted by the cheap fling: 'We need constructive criticism'! Very well, I will furnish that, in brief suggestions only, of course: 1) The little 'Christian element' needs a strengthened faith and love. That is gained only by a new, daily conversion, a new attachment to Christ, a new search of the Scriptures; a prayerfully prepared frequent communing with Christ at the Lord's Table, whereby the solidarity (union) of the saints of God is tightened. 2) The 'Christian elements' should pray for more spiritual boldness. We are too afraid of the devil in the Church, while we shout at him screamingly in the world outside of the Church. We need more bold confessorship of Christ in word and deed. 3) We must ask for new grace to quit worshiping 'church success.' To be faithful to Christ in His Word and to leave the 'success' or failure to the Lord of the Church is apostolic, Lutheran-like, above all Christ-like. The 'Christian element' has too long demanded 'success' of their pastors at almost any price. So the pastors have often been whipped into line with the worldly element to obtain rapid success. And God knows how we have wept, anguished, bled in the secrecy of our life that the 'Christian element' has been just as hard-heartedly exacting of mere 'church success' as over the worldlings, until the clergy often lost heart with their spiritual vision of things. So God now lashes that unfaithful 'Christian element' with growing loss of leadership. The cure is to cure the original disease. 4) When the worldly element puts on its secular programs, we who abhor them will needs seek a cultured Christian substitute. Wrangling, criticism, a feeling of half-expressed disappointment will not suffice. There must be a cultural and life adequacy, capability, with us pastors, so that we have the spiritual and churchly and Lutheran substitute always at hand for the rank proposals of the secular element. That itself presupposes a continuous study and observation with skilled

practise. 5) Until a change in the large can take place in churches, gather the frail, scared 'Christian elements' at church gatherings where the full satisfaction for Christian hearts can be had. If the worldly element puts over its worldly banquets, which shame the name of Jesus, let us gather the Christian element to Christian joy-feasts. If the worldly element proudly dominates public counsels of the Church, gather the Christian element (which of its own free will comes freely together) into Scripture study, into meetings for counsel on Christian problems, into mission activities, and thus sustain this hard-pressed element, until God gives a great spiritual awakening. 6) Countless other advices which the good reader with Christian faith and experience can supply.

"The writer is not penning these lines as a mere theory. It has been the program of his ministry, its purpose, although God knows how frail the execution has been. I know that the advice works. I am assured in Christ that it is not futile for a pastor to have a big constructive program for church-leadership by the 'Christian element.' God fights on our side, then, please remember. His Holy Spirit guides us in those turmoils, forget not. And should we be called away to meet the 'Judge of all the earth,' we can at least with a blood-cleansed conscience confess in the sight of His eternal Majesty: Lord, it was my heart's desire to serve Thy little ones, the quiet of the land, those whom Thou hast called 'the apple of My eye.' (See Ps. 17, 8; Zech. 2, 8.) It is a fearful thing if we wound the apple of the Lord's eye, the 'Christian element' in His Church. It is divine tenderness and eternal statesmanship on the part of the simplest layman to find grace to confess in truth: 'My conscience is bound in the Word of God.' That word is the Magna Charta of the 'Christian element' of the Church. If any one questions the right to the name the 'Christian element,' we refer him to the Augsburg Confession, which has it in other words: 'the communion of saints.'"
D.

The Merger Synods. — Rev. A. C. Ernst, of Stillwater, Minn., has been appointed second Commissioner to Europe, to assist Dr. Morehead, whose work has become far too extensive to be carried on by one man. Rev. Ernst will first follow Dr. Morehead and then work from Germany as his base. — Of the late Prof. Peer Stroemme, the "most famous professor" St. Olaf College has had, his classmate, O. G. Felland relates something that was not great: "He was one of our foremost chess-players. . . . When he was a student at the Concordia Seminary at St. Louis, it would sometimes happen that he was not interested in the lectures of Prof. Guenther, and he would pull out a problem that he had clipped from the chess column of the *Globe-Democrat*, hold it at arm's length under the desk, and have it solved before the professor had finished his lecture. I have several of these problems yet, preserved in one of his scrap-books." — Speaking of the course of study at Luther College, Decorah, Iowa, and advocating the retention of Greek and Hebrew in the college curriculum, Oscar L. Olson quotes from *Learning and Living* by Ephraim Emerton, professor emeritus of Harvard University: "Martin Luther was right

when he said: ‘This we cannot deny, that, although the Gospel came and daily comes through the Holy Spirit alone, still it came through the medium of the languages, has grown by them, and must be preserved by them. According as we love the Gospel, let us eagerly study the languages, and let us not forget that we cannot well hold the Gospel firm without them. The languages are the sheath in which the dagger of the Spirit rests; they are the casket in which this jewel is enshrined; the chalice wherein this drink is borne. Because the languages have now come to the fore, they are bringing such a light and doing such mighty things that all the world marvels. Therefore, although the doctrine and the Gospel may be preached by simple preachers without the languages, yet this is a dull and weak affair, and men at last tire of it and after all fall to the ground. But where the languages are, there all is fresh and vigorous, the text is made clear, and faith is ever renewed through new and ever-new words and works.’ I am not advocating an absolute requirement of either Greek or Hebrew for the first degree in theology, but I do think that it is a pity that any really serious student who desires to be something more than a ‘simple preacher’ should neglect the opportunity of help offered by his teachers to acquire a working command of both. For a higher theological degree I would make them an ordinary requirement. I urge this careful study of the original documents, fully appreciating the mass of material that has accumulated upon them to such a depth that they are almost buried out of sight, but realizing also, perhaps a little better than the enthusiastic youth, how in every time of crisis men are ready to throw off this whole superincumbent mass and go back to the first simple problem of the meaning of the Christian message. It is for such critical moments that the student should consciously prepare himself. If he is to lead then, he must get ready now.” This is the truth; but as far as we know, this is no longer the standard at Harvard. D.

Australia. — A report has been circulated among our brethren in Australia that the Missouri Synod tolerates lodge-members among its congregations. The report was started by a pastor of the United Evangelical Lutheran Church in Australia. It is refuted by the *Australian Lutheran* (December 7, 1921) from our official publications in the *Lutheran Witness*. The fact is not blinked that there are lodge-members in congregations of the Missouri Synod, who are, however, subject to church discipline and are actually being disciplined. Such a practise cannot be classed as toleration. It would be impossible for a congregation that has adopted the policy of toleration towards lodge-members to obtain membership in the Missouri Synod. In Australia all Lutheran synods have declared themselves opposed to lodges; it only remains to be seen whether the opposition is a serious and active one.—German publications are now permitted by the Australian government “on condition that they are correct translations or faithful synopses or summaries” of English publications, are marked as such in the heading, and give page references to the respective English publication. D.

The Extra-Evangelican Christ. — “Were the person of Christianity’s Founder to be ruled off the pages of certain history for the lack of sufficient evidence,” says the *Catholic World* (December, 1921), “then by the same canon would fall nearly all the great figures of antiquity. F. C. Conybeare, of whom we may say only that he is less a radical than Professor Arthur Drews, whose extravagant theories he attacks as baseless and absurd, is willing to admit that the gospels and other Christian literature date back at least to within seventy years of the death of Christ, whereas, he points out, the chief sources of information regarding Solon, the lawgiver, for example, are Plutarch and Diogenes, writers who lived *seven and eight hundred years after him*. And this is but one example of hundreds that could be adduced of ‘individuals for whose reality we have not a tithe of the evidence which we have for that of Jesus.’”

Inveighing against the blatant suppositions of Higher Criticism of the Strauss-Drews type, the writer of the article, Edwards Roberts Moore, pleads for fair play in dealing with the voluminous evidence on behalf of the historical existence of Christ. He writes: “The enemies of Christianity had sought in many ways to devitalize and to destroy entirely the New Testament record of Christ; it remained for David Friedrich Strauss, in 1835, and after him, for Professor Arthur Drews and his associates, to seek not merely to strip Christ of supernatural power and mission, but actually to deprive Him of the fundamental attribute of existence. In their judgment, the gospels were *pure myths*, and Jesus a mere creation thereof!”

This “extravagant theory” Mr. Moore regards as unfair, unhistorical, and therefore unscientific. He says: “If the more scanty and unsatisfactory evidence dealing with those dim, but majestic figures of ages antedating by many centuries the opening of our era be accepted as conclusive, then, far, far beyond all thought of question should be the voluminous testimony corroborating in every detail the traditional account of the beginnings of Christianity, a testimony that includes the findings of *true* higher criticism, as well as a great mass of matter extrinsic to the text itself, consisting of quotations from scores of the early writers, countless indirect references, and last, but not least, innumerable monuments, if not contemporary with the Apostolic Age, at least *closer to the deeds* they commemorate by many hundred years than the earliest record we have of many an event universally regarded as unimpeachably historic.”

While the writer believes that “to-day *Das Leben Jesu* of Strauss and *Die Christus-Mythe* of Drews with their fantastic ramblings live but as reminders of the absurdities to which the human mind will descend in its attempt to defend a preconceived notion,” he claims that the favorite arguments of Higher Critical Mythists involve a *petitio principii*, “since, as a matter of fact, impartial history did not thus, by its silence, bear witness against Christ.” Referring to Josephus, he avers that even if Josephus had been silent, this might be explained satisfactorily by the *vanity and opportunism* of Josephus, who by “speaking of Jesus and Christianity might have compromised

the Jewish cause, which he had at heart, and also *his own reputation* as a man of letters, which he had still more at heart.” However, Josephus has not been silent! As a matter of fact there are in his writings three distinct references to Christ and matters Christian. In the first place, we have a “splendid and unassailable account” (cf. Keim in *Jesus of Nazareth*, Vol. 1, p. 16) of the mission and death of John the Baptist which *agrees with and confirms* the Gospel-narratives of the same events. Moreover, we find in *Antiquities* (Bk. XX, chap. IX) a passage which describes the *death of St. James the Less*, the brother of Jesus, which cannot be stigmatized as a forgery, as Drews would have it, but must be regarded as authentic, since it is not only quoted in full by Origen, but also constitutes “*genuine Jewish history, without a trace of Christian embellishment.*” If, then, this passage is genuine, what does it prove? “It has, in the first place, a direct reference to ‘*Jesus who was called Christ*;’ and the manifest identification of this Jesus with Him whom we know as the Founder of Christianity is undeniable, in spite of the far-fetched ratiocinations of Professor Drews and his school.” “In the second place, this phrase, although it expresses no *personal opinion* of the author, does something far more significant and important: it indicates a wide-spread knowledge of — and shall we not say acceptance of? — the *Messianic claims* of the Jesus he mentions.” “Finally, as Battiol points out, although it does not declare explicitly whether St. James and his companion were accused of violating the laws of the *Law*, the penalty inflicted — they were stoned to death — is that decreed in Deuteronomy against those who would serve strange gods. It is clearly implied, therefore, that their crime consisted in the *desertion of Judaism* for some other form of worship.”

However, “it is about the third of these reputed passages from the Jewish historian that the greatest controversy rages.” Quoted in the current translation the passage reads:—

About this time lived Jesus, a wise man, if it be proper to call Him a man; for He was a worker of miracles, a teacher of such men as receive the truth with pleasure. He drew over to Him both many Jews and many of the Greeks. He was the Christ. And when Pilate, at the instigation of the principal men among us had condemned Him to the cross, those who had loved Him at first did not forsake Him. For He appeared to them alive again on the third day; the divine prophets having foretold these and many other wonderful things concerning Him. And the sect of the Christians, so named after Him, are not extinct to this day.

Though this passage is thrice quoted by Eusebius, it has been declared to be a Christian interpolation, added to the text by some forger between the years 248 and 320. The basis of this contention, which is supported by Drews, Throburn, Linck, Schuerer, Father Lagrange, and others, is the theory that the *sentiments* contained in it are far *different* from anything Josephus could have written. Against this supposition the writer says: “But, you object, Josephus said of Jesus: ‘This was the Christ.’ What if he did? Does he thereby express his own belief in the Messiahship of our Savior? No more than a Protestant who calls a priest ‘Father’ by that word acknowl-

edges all that title connotes. ‘Father’ is simply the conventional title of the priest. In like manner, the writer of this passage was merely seeking to connect historically the character of Jesus, of whom he was speaking, and that of Christ, with which many of his readers would be familiar, without advancing any personal opinion whatsoever regarding the theological accuracy or significance of the identification. It is as if he said: This Jesus, of whom I am speaking, is the same person as Christ, the Founder of that sect you probably have heard of, the Christians. Would it take one of these same Christians to write anything so *simple and free of implication* as that?”

Again: “Immediately after this phrase, which the protagonist of the ‘silence’ would make so damning, we read the following: ‘Now when at the instigation of our chief men, Pilate condemned Him to the cross, those who had first loved Him did not fall away.’ Is this the style of a Christian apologist? Here we have merely a *cold, lifeless* statement of fact, with perhaps an implication of faint surprise that His followers did not fall away; no word of the *noble cause* in which He died, no word of *vindication*, no word of *praise or affection*, not a single *Christian thought* or *expression!* In the words of Professor Barnes: ‘Why should a Christian trouble himself to make up such an interpolation as this?’ So with the eminent author whom we have just quoted, we feel justified in concluding that the *content* and *style* of the passage under consideration furnish *no argument* against its authenticity.”

After quoting passages referring to Christ and Christians, from Tacitus (*Annals XV*, 4, 4), Suetonius (*Life of Claudius* and *Life of Nero*), Pliny the Younger (*Epistle X*, 96), Celsus (*A True Discourse*), and tracing “the indisputable testimony of a very early date to the existence and person of Christ” as preferred by Lueian, Basilides, Marcion, Valentius, and Heracleum, all writers of the second century, the essayist concludes his researches by saying: “And so we see that after all Christ is not a mysterious personage, who left an impression only upon *history written by His friends* and, therefore, *open to suspicion*. In fact, when all circumstances are taken into consideration, the manner in which history was written in those days, the many reasons which would induce non-Christian writers of the period to be silent about Him, the peculiar character of His mission, life, and work, it is not surprising that we find, comparatively speaking, so *little* in contemporary profane history about Him; and, on the other hand, a source of the greatest wonder — at least to those not possessing a strong faith in the divine ordering of all things — is the *completeness* with which the Gospel-narrative, as it has been handed down to us, is verified by the findings of history certainly not prejudiced in favor of Christianity.”

“One good thing, however, Mythism did accomplish, — to draw good out of evil is often the way of the Lord, — it constituted an occasion for us to search into the pages of secular history, and to discover the real strength that our case possesses. Strauss and Drews and the rest had eyes and saw not, and then, with the rash folly of

a moth that would seek, with its flimsy wings, to cut off from the earth the light of the sun, they thought to hide from their fellow-men Him whom they would not see. But the penalty of wilful blindness has been paid; they and their work are well-nigh forgotten, and the ghost of the monster conceived by their warped brains is laid and walks no more, while more glorious than ever, majestic, dominating, standing out like a towering mountain peak against the blue sky of Truth, is the eternal, resplendent figure of Jesus the Christ."

MUELLER.

The Marvelous Mr. Wells.—In a rather verbose and rambling sketch on Mr. Wells, author of the *Outline of History* and special reporter for the *New York World* at the Washington Conference, Charles W. Wood, in *Review of Reviews* (December, 1921), quotes him as follows: "I began thinking out the *Outline of History* when I was a boy in school. I did not appreciate this fully at the time, but I sensed a considerable disparity between the evolution of man as science explained it and the evolution of me as it was written in the history books. According to one I was a unit of the human race which had climbed out of the mire in a million years of struggle, until eventually there had arrived on earth a conscious, articulate, intelligent, and creative being. According to the other, I was an Englishman, and my enlightenment was principally due to that. From the one point of view my problems were human. From the other they were dominantly national. But from which point of view was our world-thinking done — from that of biological science or from that of nationalistic emotions?"

"It was this idea," so Mr. Wood delineates the further development of the boy Wells, "in the back of young Herbert Wells's head which eventually produced this epoch-making book. Wells was a poor boy with a thirst for knowledge. He worked in a draper's shop. A mere college education, apparently, did not appeal to him. What he wanted was to *know things*, and Professor Huxley at that time was committed openly to the near-crime of finding things out. In the minds of most people, Darwinism was akin to blasphemy. It was morally necessary, it was thought, to retain our romantic attitude toward biology. That man had legs was perfectly legitimate knowledge, and physiology of a sort was perfectly permissible. But how came he to have legs instead of fins? All inquiry in that direction was taboo as likely to upset some very necessary assumptions. But Wells asked, 'How come?' and he went to Huxley to find out. And the more he studied with Huxley, the more he threw himself into the fight for the right to report things *as they are*."

If Mr. Wells, whom the writer styles a superdreadnought, has thrown himself into the fight for the right to report *things as they are*, he has certainly not made use of that right in his *Outline of History*. In fact, the main criticism of Mr. Wells's book is to the effect that he has minced and mauled historic data, warping and twisting periods and epochs to fit them into his scheme. "The chief defects of the book," writes *Art and Archeology*, "are the faulty perspective and

proportions and the preposterous valuations. Nearly three hundred pages are wasted on geologic eons and conjectural prehistoric human history, for which a brief chapter would have sufficed. More space is given to Philip and Alexander of Macedon than to the civilization and literature of Greece from Salamis to Chaeroneia. The literature and law of Rome and their influence are altogether ignored. The Renaissance is lost to sight, and the entire political history of modern Europe from 1400 to 1800 muddled and skimped in two confused and confusing chapters."

However, it is with Mr. Wells's lack of justly evaluating Christianity as a potent and revolutionizing force for good that a Christian student of history, above all, takes issue. The *Catholic World* (August, 1921) points out one statement which strikingly reveals Mr. Wells's utter lack of proper perspective and just valuation in this respect. We read: "Christianity, he tells us, was 'one of the numerous *blood and salvation* religions that infested the decaying Empire.' There he leaves it: there, we must assume, is his *compendious judgment of Christianity as a historical fact*. 'The numerous blood and salvation religions,'—were they so numerous? I suppose that those cults which used the *Taurobolium* are the 'blood and salvation religions' to which he alludes. It is not always easy to arrive at a clear knowledge of these ancient cults and their ceremonies, but of this particular one we have a full account in the works of the poet Prudentius."

Having described the *Taurobolium*, the writer continues: "It is a horrible picture, but we must look on it, if we are to understand what is implied by Mr. Wells's statement that Christianity was but one of the numerous 'blood and salvation' religions of the day. As far as scholars have been able to ascertain, this disgusting ceremony came into the Roman Empire with the worship of the *Magna Mater*, or Cybele, from Phrygia. The worship may be said to have been, in its origin, that of the great, beneficent earth from which all things spring, and the ceremony in question, with many another accretion, was grafted on to it, though not absolutely confined to it, for the first recorded *Taurobolium* took place during the reign of Hadrian at Puteoli and was in honor of *Venus Caelestis*, possibly by Roman syncretic methods associated with Cybele. At any rate, in A. D. 134 we hear of it for the first time in connection with the Romans. The last recorded instance seems to have been in the fourth century, and the scene was a minor temple of the goddess, the great temple being on the Palatine Hill. And, by the way, let us note that the *Taurobolium* must have been of *rare occurrence*! Further it seems probable, though not certain, that the *Taurobolium* became engrafted on to the worship of *Mithras*. No doubt, we have to thank Renan very largely for this (information), for it was his suggestion that it was a race between Christianity and Mithraism, in which the former did win, but the latter might have done so. Mithraism was essentially a soldier's religion, and the soldiery of Rome, which went everywhere, took this and other of their beliefs to all parts of the Empire. It was

a purely masculine religion, which excluded female adherents, a very potent reason why it never could have been a successful rival to Christianity. It had its various grades, its secrets, its initiation ceremonies, its ceremonial dresses. This religion was, however, quite distinct from that of Cybele; it was of Iranic origin, whilst the other was Phrygian. If, as is quite likely, the Taurobolium was introduced into Mithraism, then Mithraism may be counted as another of the 'blood and salvation' religions. But we are told that they were numerous. Where are the rest? Candidly, I see no justification for the word 'numerous.'"

Taking up the next statement of the Wellsian sentence, the writer goes on to say: "Nor do I think that the words '*infested the decaying Empire*' can be justified. No doubt, the desire is to describe Christianity with what might be called its *fellow puerilities like Mithraism*, as the *bacilli of decay which flourish on dead or dying bodies*. But is this historically correct? Rome fell, so the text-books put it, in 476, and whatever significance we may attach to that term, we can hardly quarrel with the statement that the Empire was then in a state of decay. But between that date and the date when Christianity had acquired some definite position in Rome, many years elapsed, more than have passed since white men first made a home in North America. And what happened in those years? In B. C. 29 Octavius, returning to Rome in triumph, closed the doors of the Temple of Janus and closed they remained until A. D. 242, when the great epoch of the *Pax Romana*, perhaps the most wonderful era that the world has ever seen, came to an end. With long-continued peace came the corresponding prosperity, yet this is just the time when Christianity passed through childhood into early youth. Was the Empire really a *decaying institution* during all this period?"

"Still less can I find," the writer continues, "any possible justification for the truly astonishing lack of historical perspective exhibited in the remaining member of the short paragraph with which I have been dealing. Christianity is *contemptuously dismissed as just one of those absurd and out-of-date religions* which pullulated in the empire at the time of its decay—just that, and nothing more! If that thesis is to be sustained, we must ask for an explanation of a fact which is carefully ignored in the paragraph and almost equally neglected in the whole book. Why did this particular absurdity go on whilst the others came to an end? None but the wilfully blind can fail to see that this is a matter which must be cleared up before we can even begin to discuss the thesis in question. Cybele and Attis are gone; gone is the Magna Mater Deorum, gone, too, Mithras with Astarte, Isis, and the whole heterogenous pantheon of later Rome. They have stayed so far from memory that it is only by the utmost patience and research that scholars can wring their secrets from slabs and from the furious comments of their Christian adversaries. Where is Christianity to-day? If it was just one of those numerous absurdities, why and how has it taken the place it holds to-day and has held for centuries? How is it that this particular absurdity has,

page Mr. Wells, secured the veneration and belief of an overwhelming preponderance of the best intellects of all ages? *Believers in revelation have a satisfactory answer* to these questions: no other explanation has been put forward which will for a moment hold water."

The following sentences, with which we shall conclude this discussion, no doubt reflect the sentiments of every Christian scholar as regards the warping of historical facts by antichristian writers of the Wells type, in order to suit their antireligious fancies. "The fact of the matter is that one almost loses patience when one tries to read the works of those who fondly imagine that they are dealing scientifically with the matter of comparative religion. Many of these writers understand neither science nor religion nor what is entailed in a just comparison." In his *Outline of History* the marvelous Mr. Wells has certainly proved himself incapable of appreciating either of the two.

MUELLER.

BOOK REVIEW.

Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, Mo.:—

Popular Commentary of the Bible. New Testament. Vol. I: Matthew to Acts. *Paul E. Kretzmann, M. A., Ph. D., B. D.* VII and 679 pages, 7×10½. \$4.50, postpaid.

God be praised for this work! Many a pastor in our Lutheran Church has, no doubt, been asked by his members for a commentary on the Bible in the English language. Until now we have always been at a loss unqualifiedly to recommend a commentary which could be bought by our people at a popular price. Now we have the first volume of such a commentary, and our Publishing House announces that not only Volume II of the New Testament, Romans to Revelation, but, perhaps, also Volume I of the Old Testament will be placed on the market yet this year.

The volume which has just left the press contains an exposition of the four gospel narratives according to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, and the Acts of the Apostles; three maps: "Palestine at the Time of Christ," "The Western Half of the Scripture World, Showing St. Paul's Journeys," and a relief map of Palestine; and the following special articles and *excursus*: The Virgin Birth, The Obligation of a Rightful Betrothal, The Baptism of John, The Jewish Synagog, The Significance of the Sermon on the Mount, The "Son of Man," Roman Government and Tax Collection in Palestine, Miracles, The Observance of Sunday, Christ's Sphere of Activity in His Prophetic Office, The Primacy of Peter, The Call of the Gospel, The Pharisees and Sadducees, The Baptism of Children, The Sin against the Holy Ghost, Demoniac Possession, The Mode of Baptism, The Enrolment of Quirinius, The Obligation of the Work of Atonement, The Deity of Jesus, The Logos of the Prolog, "The Flesh of the Son of Man," A Tabellar Harmony of the Gospel-story, The Early History of Paul's Life, The Trustworthiness of Luke as a Historian, Vision, Dream, and Revelation, A Summary of the Latter Part of Paul's Life, A Brief History

of English Bible Translations. A foreword was written by Prof. J. T. Mueller.

A good commentary must ring true to the hermeneutical principle, *Scriptura Scripturam interpretatur*. Measured by this standard, the *Popular Commentary* is a true exposition of the *sensus litteralis* of the Author of the Scriptures, the Holy Ghost.

The writer of a popular commentary will make use of all the critical apparatus of the learned exegete, including a thorough study of the original Hebrew and Greek texts on the basis of the best manuscripts, a critical examination of orthodox and heterodox exegetical literature, and a careful review of the latest archeological findings; but in his commentary he will give only the *results* of his laborious work in a concise form and in such plain language that the average layman can read and understand. Judged from this view-point, one will not be disappointed in the *Popular Commentary*. And this very fact at the same time also makes it a reliable desk-book for the busy pastor and preacher.

The division of the chapters according to subjects, which are made to stand out in the text, and the adding of a summary at the end of each chapter, makes it possible to see at a glance what is treated, and greatly enhances the value of the book, especially for the layman; for example, Matthew, chapter 18: The Greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven, 1—14; How to Deal with an Erring Brother, 15—22; Parable of the Unmerciful Servant, 23—35.

While it has been desirable to expand on such doctrines and such disputed questions as to which even the layman will desire to obtain more detailed information, *e. g.*, The Virgin Birth of Christ, The Observance of Sunday, The Primacy of Peter, Baptism of Children, Demoniac Possession, and many others, it is a happy arrangement that such information is given under separate heads, and that it is not included in the regular text, but placed at the end of the chapter.

A few samples are herewith given to show both the manner of treatment and the style. Acts 8, 14—17: "Special Gifts of the Holy Spirit: V. 14. Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the Word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John, v. 15. who, when they were come down, prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Ghost v. 16. (for as yet He was fallen upon none of them; only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus). V. 17. Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost. The apostles never undertook to exercise hierarchical powers and to assume a jurisdiction which they did not possess. But they had been commissioned by Christ as the teachers unto all nations and therefore were anxious to establish true unity of faith in all congregations, no matter where they might be established. It was an important point in the progress of Christianity that people outside of the Old Testament covenant should receive the Gospel and be added to the Church of Christ. When the apostles therefore received the news that Samaria had received the Word of God, that its people had professed allegiance to the Redeemer, they sent Peter and John as their personal representatives to

find out the truth of the report and, if so, to establish the bonds of fraternal unity. The fact of the report being certified to, Peter and John not only extended to the Samaritan Church the hand of fellowship, but also transmitted to these new converts the wonderful gifts which they themselves had received. The Samaritans had been baptized, and therefore they were in full possession of the pardon of God, as well as of the Spirit which sanctifies, Mark 16, 16; Acts 2, 38. But now they were equipped with extraordinary gifts, with the power to perform miracles, to speak with strange tongues, to prophesy, and to give other peculiar evidences of the Spirit's omnipotence and divine majesty.²⁷⁾ These extraordinary manifestations had not yet been imparted to these believers, although all the spiritual gifts were theirs by and through Baptism. But now these powers were transmitted to them by the laying on of hands, for it was a part of the Lord's plan in the early Church to use miracles and signs to confirm the preaching of the Gospel. 'The design of such gifts, and the way in which they were exercised in the congregation, are fully set forth by Paul in 1 Cor. 12—14. These gifts served a temporary purpose, until the facts, doctrine, commandments, and promises of the new covenant were committed to writing by inspired men, when the prophecies, tongues, and miraculous knowledge of individual teachers gave place to the written Word.'^{28)"}

We also give a quotation from the *excursus* on The Sin against the Holy Ghost, the author summing up his remarks in these words: "The following points, therefore, should be kept in mind always: The person that commits the sin against the Holy Ghost must either have been converted, or must at least have had the opportunity of feeling the influence of the Holy Ghost upon his heart. It is essential that the truth be rejected, whose soundness and sacredness the sinner cannot deny. The person living in this sin will continue in his stubborn resistance, with blasphemous, outspoken mockery of the work of the Holy Ghost, until the end. The sin is not unpardonable on account of its greatness, but on account of its nature of rejecting all pardon. No one has committed the sin that still seeks repentance. And finally, we cannot be sure until after a person's death whether he has committed the sin against the Holy Ghost, and even then it is best to keep the judgment in abeyance.¹⁰⁾"

The mechanical make-up of the *Popular Commentary*, paper, print, arrangement of matter, and binding, is a good sample of the art of book-making. The price is reasonable. The publisher should not fail to have the author prepare a detailed index, and add it to the second volume of each Testament.

It goes without saying that every pastor should persuade members of his church to buy the new *Popular Commentary*. We believe that the younger members of our churches will be especially interested in this

27) Luther, 12, 143.

28) McGarvey, *New Commentary on Acts*, 145.

10) Stoeckhardt, *Biblische Geschichte des Neuen Testaments*, 59; Walther, *Gesetz und Evangelium*, 380—389; Luther, 10, 1198—1209.

new Lutheran commentary in the English language. It will mean much for the future of our Lutheran Church if our young people do not neglect the study of the Scriptures. We believe that the first edition of the *Popular Commentary* will soon be sold out.

FRITZ.

1. *Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis, Mo.:—*

Synodical reports of the Missouri Synod, Nos. 3 to 5, and 7 to 16. In the collection of District reports, regularly published by the Missouri Synod, we have a fine compend of current Missouri history. This is embodied chiefly in that section of these reports which records the business transactions of the various Districts. Valuable reports of committees are here submitted that show the status and progress of the various activities of the individual Districts. Then there is the thoughtful presidential address, read at the opening of conventions, and the president's report of official acts performed between two conventions. Last, but not least, there come the fine doctrinal papers, elaborated with great diligence and all of them characterized by loyal adherence to the inspired Word of God and the Confessions of our Lutheran Church. In these doctrinal papers there is, of course, manifested a variety of gifts, showing that the Lord uses many qualities in the sanctified members of His Church for particular work. The selection of topics for these doctrinal papers also evinces a fine perception of the needs of the Church in our own day. This feature appears still more strongly in the discussion of the subject in the paper itself. In the collection above mentioned we have the following papers: A paper on "The Qualities and the Marks of the Church," read by Pastor E. Berner before the 52d convention of the Michigan District. This paper follows closely the arrangement of doctrinal material in Questions 186 to 190 in our Synodical Catechism. The report of this District embodies a very valuable account of the parochial school situation in the State of Michigan and relates what measures the District had adopted to combat the attacks that have been made by secular and other interests upon our school.—At the 27th convention of the Minnesota District Pastor A. H. Kuntz read a paper on "Modern Soul-Destroying Deviations from the Doctrine Regarding Christ, Our Savior." This paper puts the finger of emphasis on a great defect in much that passes as Christian teaching in our day on the fundamental truths of the religion that proposes to save men from their sin by the substitutive work of the incarnate Son of God. A paper of this kind would deserve to be placed into the hands of many a modern preacher, who bears the name of Christian, and yet in all his official activities defeats the very purpose of the Christian ministry.—Pastor H. Heise submitted to the 9th convention of the Northern Illinois District a paper on the "Royal Office of Christ." This paper was not completed and will be continued at the next convention of the District.—A most timely subject was discussed at the 8th convention of the North Dakota and Montana District, where Dr. Pieper spoke on the subject: "What Do We Learn from Luther at Worms?" From the fulness of his theological knowledge and with scholarly erudition the author grouped the main lessons that we are to learn from Luther's attitude at Worms under the two heads: "Grace alone, and the Scriptures alone."—Only

brief summaries of doctrinal papers are given in the report of the 15th convention of the Oregon and Washington District. Pastor L. Stuebe spoke on "The First Christian Congregation at Jerusalem as a Model for Our Modern Congregations." He exhibited from the life of this earliest church its charities, its missions, and its tribulation and persecution. At the same convention Rev. W. J. Janssen spoke on "The Christian Home, Its Sanctity and Its Duties." — The North Wisconsin District chose not to embody the doctrinal paper submitted at its 3d convention by Dr. P. Kretzmann, but to publish this paper as a separate print. We are informed that the paper discusses the 46th Psalm, the hymn of valor and challenge of the Lutheran Church,—certainly a timely subject to discuss before a Lutheran convention in the memorable year of 1921.—The 10th convention of the Atlantic District listened to a paper on "Infant Baptism" by Dr. J. N. H. Jahn, which shows, first, that infant baptism is commanded by God; secondly, that also to infants Baptism is a means of grace.—The report of the 27th convention of the Southern District appears without a doctrinal paper. Such a paper, however, was read before the convention on the subject: "The Office of a Bishop." A melancholy interest attaches to this particular paper: it had been prepared by Pastor J. F. Reinhardt of Pensacola, Fla., but the author entered the eternal rest of God's saints before the convention met, and his paper was read by Rev. H. Reuter.—With particular interest the report of the first convention of the Colorado District will be taken up by our readers. With the consent of the General Body this District, formerly a part of the Kansas District, was given separate organization. The presidential address of Pastor Lehenbauer strikes the right note when declaring that also this new District shall be recognized by all who view it as a seed blessed by the Lord. The doctrinal paper submitted at this District by Rev. Theodore Hoyer discusses the subject of "The Saving Grace of God." The discussion of this subject will be continued at the next convention of this District.—At the 49th convention of the Eastern District Pastor J. Sohn submitted a fine practical paper on "Family Worship," which is to be continued at the next convention. Both because of the subject and because of the happy treatment that was given it and the lively discussion which it elicited, a very complete report, perhaps in the form of a separate publication, would be desirable.—The 28th convention of the Canada District listened to a historical paper by Rev. T. J. A. Huegli on "The Defection and Return of Israel in the Days of Othniel." The period covered by this paper is the one recorded in Judg. 3, 5—11.—Another new District of the Missouri Synod, whose organization was ordered by the late convention of the General Body, is the Alberta and British Columbia District. The first report of this District is submitted without a doctrinal paper. We are informed that Pastor R. Shippanowski submitted an opportune and instructive paper on the subject of "Church and Ministry." It is said that this paper was suited particularly to the needs of this new District.—A highly instructive paper, showing much original research in the pertinent literature, was submitted by Pastor F. W. Loose on the subject: "The Mormons," at the 11th convention of the South Dakota District. In the territory where this paper was read and discussed it certainly met special

local needs, but even beyond the border of the Western States, where Mormonism is a standing danger, Pastor Loose's paper will be gratefully received by all who desire first-hand information in a nutshell on this subject.—At the 9th convention of the Central Illinois District Pastor E. Berthold discussed Article VII of the Augsburg Confession: "Of the Church," and Prof. R. Neitzel submitted an English paper on Article VIII of the Augsburg Confession. This District has hit upon the happy plan of discussing at its annual conventions the entire Augsburg Confession, article after article, so that when this series is completed, we shall have a valuable commentary on the basic Confession of the Lutheran Church.

Most of the papers mentioned in this review are German, but nearly every author has worked also with English sources, and in Districts like the Southern, the Oregon and Washington, and the Central Illinois District, just mentioned, there have been English papers. Much of the business transactions in these Districts is through the medium of the English language. The report of the Southern District is entirely English.

2. *Schriftenverein (E. Klaerner), Zwickau, Saxony:*—

A beautiful souvenir volume, inscribed, *Eine kleine Kraft*, has been published by Pastor M. Willkomm in commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the founding of his church at Niederplanitz in Saxony. An account is here given of the origin of the Free Church movement in Germany, the persecution which the early confessors of genuine Lutheranism had to suffer from a hostile state church, their limited resources and unlimited zeal, and last, not least, the manifest blessing of God which has rested upon their humble endeavors and has caused them to become a spiritual power for good in a decadent and decrepit Church, that has not been fully recognized by the Germans as yet, but, if present signs do not deceive, will become a still greater force for true Christianity and confessional Lutheranism in the future. The little booklet is illustrated by the insertion of a view of the congregation's property at Niederplanitz and photographs of men who have been prominent in its history, particularly Dr. Otto Willkomm, for many years a wise leader not only of his own congregation, but of the Saxon Free Church in general.—*Schrift und Bekennen* is the title of a theological supplement, which, since the beginning of 1920, has been published quarterly in connection with the organ of the Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Free Church of Saxony and Other States. The four issues of this publication, completing the first volume, give evidence of the solid theological work that is being done by our brethren in Germany. The opening article by Professor Stallmann explains the choice of the title of this publication. A serial article by the same author discusses one of the controverted points in modern Lutheran theology, to wit: "The Conduct of Human Will Before, During, and After Conversion." Rev. M. Willkomm has contributed articles on our definition of theology and on the guilt of modern positive theology. Each issue gives a survey of contemporaneous church events in Germany, and the editorial judgment expressed with the review of these events is pointed and fair. We commend this thoughtful undertaking of our brethren to the attention of our readers.—A doctrinal paper read at the convention

of the Saxon Free Church during 1921 was on the subject of "Infant Baptism" and was submitted by Rev. Th. Reuter. The paper has been published as a separate print. After giving the history of the institution and practise of pedobaptism, the author discusses the following doctrinal points: 1) Children must be brought to faith in order to be saved; 2) a means of grace ordained by God is required to bring them unto faith; 3) the means of grace ordained by God to bring children unto faith and thus unto salvation is, without doubt, Holy Baptism; 4) Holy Baptism can work saving faith in infants; 5) according to the command of Christ, baptizing and teaching must go hand in hand.—An old friend comes to our desk in the form of *Der Ev.-Luth. Hausfreund* for 1922. Like its predecessors, it is full of timely reading-matter, relating particularly to Luther's translation of the New Testament during his Wartburg exile.—This publication is accompanied by a *Lutherkalender* for 1922, which can be mounted in our homes. It contains one leaf for each week of the year and offers beneath the calendar part a Bible-passage and a selection from Luther's writings which are to be meditated during that week.—One of the teachers of the Lutheran congregation at Niederplanitz, Mr. Fr. Gillhoff, introduces himself to the larger reading public as a Christian poet of promise by a collection of poems which he entitles *Lichter der Heimat* (Home Lights). The publication is embellished with illustrations by R. Schaefer and O. Rothe. The underlying thought of all the poems contained in this collection is the Christian home; first the one in which a person is reared, then the one which he rears himself. How the course of the church-year, from Advent to Reformation Day, is observed in such a home, and how the Christian hope of the everlasting home beyond is cherished and nurtured in our Christian homes here on earth is shown by the poetical compositions in this volume of 176 pages.—A publication that entitles the publisher to the gratitude of a host of parents and children is *Lasset die Kindlein zu mir kommen* (Suffer the Little Children to Come unto Me). By Dr. C. M. Zorn. It reproduces in 298 devotional exercises the contents of the four gospels, and thus represents a child's biography of our dear Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. The book will be used with delight by children and parents at their daily family worship.—A number of thoughtful tracts have been issued by this publication house that relate to the spiritual needs of Christians in Germany at the present time. The titles of these are: *Seid getrost! Fuerchtet euch nicht!* *Unentbehrlich fuer jedermann!* *Halte, was du hast!* by Dr. O. Willkomm. *Wer sind und was wollen die Missourier?* by Gustav Ruemelin. The two tracts named last in particular deserve wide dissemination. Dr. Willkomm's tract appears in its fifth edition. It is a defense of Luther's German Bible over against the unwarranted claims of the Modern Revised Version. The tract by Pfarrer Ruemelin, a member of the Wuerttembergische Landeskirche is an appreciation of the doctrinal position of the Missouri Synod and her methods of church-work that is prized all the more because it has come from an unexpected quarter. It is a rare experience for Missourians to receive such fair treatment as is accorded them in this little tract of twenty-four pages.

D.